

Lessons Learned

- Perception is important.
- Guidelines for cleaning, as well as other things, would be good to have.
- Conversations with public health departments are important. Health departments messages sometimes can change as a situation progresses.
- SED also was making decisions quickly.
- Policy considerations can pop up quickly.
- What if a staff member can't work in the building?
- Communication of “heresay” goes faster than the “truth.”
- Communication tools that were used: email lists, web page. Provide email links for others.
- Regents examinations? AP exams?
- With regard to AP exams – students could show up at another district to take the exam. This was not something all the other districts knew about.
- The media is eager for information.
- Students, if dismissed for a long time, should have all their belongings so that they might be able to use them during the closure.
- The length of the school year, and state aid, has to be addressed by SED and/or the legislature.
- Need to differentiate between student and staff responsibilities. What can we expect from our staff in terms of being able to provide “instruction?”
- We'll all need to survey students; get phone #s, email, etc.

Low Tech Ideas

Here are some ideas for sustaining instruction when schools are closed:

List of resources then figure out how to maximize them with your students.

1. US mail – set up procedures with local post office to verify they can handle the increase
2. Bus routes/ districts' transportation department (distributing and collecting both instruction and food) with Fire houses/community resources (set community delivery points).
3. Phone/Cell phone (basic analog phone connection). Meet me feature (conference call) as a regional service.
4. Radio
5. Television (Does every home have access to public TV with loss of power?)
6. Bulletin Boards/Electronic Signs in front of public buildings

Discussion:

If teachers are home for an extended period of time and live outside of the district you may have to do a collaborative lesson plan. This could be accommodated through grade 8. Beyond that you could do self directed learning. Beyond that you could utilize BOCES for coordinated learning for local programming. There a teacher could show up and then streaming could be done but this falls into high tech.

Day count – when does it become important to get something back from them beyond you've got your textbook? You need a layered plan (beyond flu, beyond a storm – something that would keep you out of school beyond 20 days). First 5 you get information in the mail, 2nd 5 you get more information, next 5 you kick into high tech, next five you get information back along with continued instruction via low/high tech. The first two days it will take you to determine if it will be a long term absence so instructional materials should be in the mail or on the bus. The phone becomes a good resource to get information and feedback back.

We need to touch on how this becomes more of the norm, second nature. We want students to be learning because they want to be learning not because of an emergency. Every district will be different with their layered plan so they will have to adopt their own plan but regionally we'll have to have a best practice to stop gap when an issue pops up. The different scenarios and resources is what has to become our "Disaster Recovery Plan" our backup.

Higher Tech Solutions

Technology assumption: Students and Teachers have computer equipment and Internet Bandwidth.

Instructional assumption: Lessons could be both introductory and developed for reviewing previously learned content.

Possible solutions for providing continuity of instruction:
(No particular order of preference)

1. Social Networking such as Facebook
2. District Websites
3. Remote District Wan Direct Connect (Cytrix, Classlink, Network Dropboxes)
4. Courseware & Instructional Learning Systems (Plato, Aha!, Novanet, other Content Delivery Systems)
5. Online Course Management Systems – Moodle and Blackboard
6. Content Websites (i.e. Textbook websites, Castle Learning, Studyzone.org, NOVEL, Library Databases, other study sites, etc.)
7. Online Assessment Systems (i.e. Accelerated Reader, AIMS Web)
8. Web 2.0 Solutions - Wikis and Blogs, Podcasts, TeacherTube, Youtube
9. Virtual Learning Environments (VLS, Second Life)
10. Video Conferencing and Webinars
11. Portal Sites (Google Docs, MyGradebook, ProgressBook, etc.)
12. Online Textbooks, audio texts, and E-books
13. Mobile Devices (Cell Phones, Kindles, Itouchs, Laptops, mini-laptops)
14. Text Messages, Instant Messaging, E-mail

Recommended Digital Content Format Considerations:

- Stored in PDF format or district supported file formats
- Viewable on several browser standards
- Viewable on several hardware solutions (mobile vs. workstation)
- Content chunked in multiple files to keep download sizes low.
- Use district copy machines as distributing devices in addition to teacher workstations

Staff Considerations

Staffing issues

- Contractual issues
- No policy exists
- Reasons for not being at work
 - Doctor orders
 - County health mandates
 - Individual initiative to take sick leave
- Staff responsibility to communicate with administration
- Communication about what is actually happening
- Vaccine needs to be made available
- Expectations for instructors to be able to use the e-learning medium effectively?
- Updated phone/email information
 - Phone trees
 - Robo-communications
- If instructors are being paid, there is an expectation that they are providing instruction or work that supports instruction
- We know that staff want to do the right thing to provide for the students
- Union representatives need to be involved
- Athletics considerations
 - Coaching considerations, when one school is closed, can a “coach” from that or another school/building attend non-affected athletic event
- Other extra-curricular considerations
- Inconsistency’s from one school district to the next could cause confusion

Layers of Expectations

- Separated staff
 - Individuals kept apart
- Grouped Staff
 - Small groups expected to be together
- Cases of disaster of large magnitude
 - Basics first
 - Organization and instruction second

Need for being involved in policy changes to be prepared at

- District level
- State level
- Communications
- Level of expectations

Considerations if Facing Extended Closures

- Nature of the Crisis
- District Diversity
 - Geography
 - Size
- Timing
 - Time of year (season, testing, etc.)
 - Readiness of plan
 - Time needed in which to do the planning
 - Time needed by teachers and staff to be prepared
- Families and homes
 - Timely-communication
 - Language barriers
 - Latch-key kids
 - Family structure
 - Modes of communication
- Staff
 - Professional development
 - Contracts
 - Disaster recovery team
- Access to Technology
 - Limited access in some homes
 - No access at home
 - Post office capacity to do large mailings in a short turn around
- Accurate and timely communication with the media
 - Proactive communication with media

- Lack of experience with similar situation (hence the need for all this preparation)
- Financial issues
 - Resources needed in order to be prepared
 - State aid when closed